

**CAPE VERDEAN NOTIONS
OF MIGRANT REMITTANCES**

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Abstract

The transfer of money from migrants to their non-migrant relatives is a key, symbol of the quality and meaning of transnational kinship relations. This article analyses how people in Cape Verde view migrant family members' economic obligations and it examines the concomitant moral discourse. Through a detailed ethnographic study the article explores how gender and kinship positions interplay with the moral obligation to send remittances, and it also inquires into the differences between rural and urban people's attitudes towards monetary gifts. Moreover, the importance of the receiver's status in the local society is discussed and the role of the personal relation between the sender and the receiver. Thus the analysis goes beyond an instrumental and rationalistic approach to remittances, which is common in much research, and explores the significance of this money for emotions and social relations.

Keywords: migrant remittances, Cape Verde, transnational relations, moral, country of origin

Resumo

Para os seus parentes não emigrantes as remessas dos emigrantes são um símbolo chave da qualidade e do significado das relações de parentesco transnacionais. Este artigo analisa como as pessoas em Cabo Verde encaram as obrigações económicas dos emigrantes membros de família e examina o discurso moral concomitante. Através de um estudo etnográfico detalhado o artigo explora como posições de género e parentesco interagem com a obrigação moral de enviar remessas e também investiga as diferenças entre as atitudes das pessoas rurais e urbanas relativamente às ofertas monetárias. Além disso, discute-se a importância do estatuto do receptor na sociedade local e o papel da relação pessoal entre remetente e receptor. Assim, a análise vai além de uma abordagem instrumental e racionalista das remessas, o que é habitual em muitas pesquisas, explorando o significado deste dinheiro em termos de emoções e relações sociais.

Palavras-chave: remessas dos emigrantes, Cabo Verde, relações transnacionais, moral, país de origem

Remittances sent by migrants are of great importance to many people's economic activities¹. Among recipients all over the world, remittances are an inextricable feature of the everyday struggle to make ends meet. People use them for buying food, educating children, constructing houses, accessing health care and making investments. Migration and remittances often seem to local people to be the only viable means of gaining access to some of the wealth and well-being of the powerful globalizing world. Also, remittances play a key role in the making and remaking of ties between migrants and their relatives in the country of origin. The dynamics of transnational kinship are inherently intertwined with the migrants' transfer of their money.

In the literature on transnational relations and remittances, the senders are often represented as hard pressed by their non-migrant² relatives' pleas for economical support. A common theme is that those who stay behind are dissatisfied with what they receive from abroad. Discontented remittance receivers are mentioned in relation to *e.g.* Ghanian (Mazzucato *et al.*, 2006), Somalian (Lindley, 2009), Sudanese (Riak Akuei, 2005), Filipino (Tacoli, 1999) and Haitian (Glick Schiller and Founon, 2001) transnational social fields. From the perspective of the remittance senders, some non-migrant family members seem to believe that in countries of destination *money can be picked from trees*. The non-migrants are often portrayed as ignorant of the harsh living conditions many migrants have to endure, and it is assumed that this ignorance makes those who stay behind predisposed to ask for more support. I believe, however, that this picture is too simplified, partly because of the intensification of transnational contacts as a result of the development of communication technologies. Today, communication patterns in transnational fields are complex and manifold. Many migrants call family members in the country of origin a couple of times per week, or even every day (Panagakos and Horst, 2006). The intensity of the contact is likely to make both the migrants and the non-migrants more informed about each others living conditions. During fieldwork among remittances receivers in Cape Verde I found much variation in their approach to the migrants' economic obligations. It became clear that some of those who are left behind show an understanding attitude towards relatives abroad who remit no or little money. In accordance with this, one important aim of this article is to nuance the picture of the eternally dissatisfied remittance receiver.

¹ In 2008, registered remittance flows to developing countries where nearly three times the official development assistance (OECD, 2009; World Bank, 2009).

² By *non-migrants* is here intended *those who stay behind*, i.e. people who have not migrated themselves but who have close relatives in countries of destination.

The overall objective of this article is to analyse how people in Cape Verde view migrant family members' economic obligations. Thus, it focuses on the voices of those left behind, and their contributions to the human dynamics of migrant transnationalism (Carling, 2008). Remittances epitomize the loyalties and the tensions between family members separated by migration processes as no other transnational practice. The transfer of money from migrants to their non-migrant relatives is a key symbol of the quality and meaning of transnational kinship relations. This article explores Cape Verdean non-migrants' understanding of remittance practices and it examines the concomitant *moral* discourse. This line of inquiry is helpful not only for understanding the moralities of remittance transfers but also for finding out what the money from abroad means to people in their everyday life. Thus, the analysis goes beyond an instrumental and rationalistic approach to remittances, which is common in much research and policy, and explores the importance of this money for emotions and social relations.

Before going into Cape Verdean notions of remittance practice I contextualize the importance of this money by discussing social and economic conditions in the country as well as the ways the transfers from the migrants are characteristically used. Thereafter I present two common ideas about economical support from family members abroad. Whereas some non-migrants underline dissatisfaction with the support from the migrants and call them *ungrateful* (*ingrôt* in Cape Verde Creole), others explain that they cannot ask for more because the migrants in the first place have to take care of their responsibilities in the new country. The concepts of *ungrateful* and *responsible* represent two narrative positions. I single out these two positions in an effort to organize and synthesize the Cape Verdean discourse on the money migrants send. In everyday life, people talk about remittances in many and sometimes ambiguous ways. In this flow of everyday speech, the words *ungrateful* and *responsible* merit special attention as they are so frequently used. The discussion of *ungrateful* and *responsible* migrants is supplemented by a section that analyses moral notions of kinship obligations, which guide much of the discourse on remittances. The later part of the article discusses the dynamic interplay between Cape Verdean understanding of migrants' economic obligations and social conditions that influence variations in these understandings. Thus, I try to tease out some factors that affect the non-migrants' expectations about support from the migrants. Here I bring up moralities and emotions of kinship, urban and rural differences, social and economic marginalization, and, lastly, the ongoing intensification of transnational communication.

The discussion in this paper builds upon anthropological fieldwork on the islands of São Vicente and Santo Antão. Both islands are situated in the northern Barlavento part of the Cape Verdean archipelago. The second largest town in Cape Verde is Mindelo, which is located on São Vicente, and there I have carried out five periods of fieldwork between 1998 and 2008. On Santo Antão, which is primarily a rural island, I have collected material during three visits in 2007 and 2008. Social and economic ties between São Vicente and Santo Antão are strong. Many people from Santo Antão have moved to Mindelo in search of a better and easier life. In fact probably the majority of the population in Mindelo originates from Santo Antão. Santo Antão also supplies the food markets of São Vicente, as very little is grown on that island. This means that although the two islands are separated by a strait, Santo Antão in many ways functions as the rural hinterland of Mindelo. An important part of my knowledge about the discourse on remittances has been gained through participant observation. I have stayed in four different households, all of which receive remittances, and I have partaken in everyday life together with members of these households and with their relatives and friends. According to local standards, one of these households is quite well off, while another is seen as *poor*. This second household is very dependent on remittances, and when no money arrives from abroad its members can only afford to buy basic foodstuff. The two other households include members who have permanent but low-paid jobs. They see themselves as belonging to *the poor*, but they have a stable income and can invest in their children's schooling. In addition to participant observation, I have carried out about 50 open-ended interviews over the years focused on remittances with people from all strata of society.

Socio-economic hierarchies and the use of remittances

When Cape Verde gained independence in 1975 the country and its inhabitants were very poor. The islands are short of natural resources and long periods of drought and starvation have recurred throughout history. From the start the new nation was highly dependent on external assistance in the form of official development aid as well as remittances from the emigrants. Since independence Cape Verde has experienced rapid economic development. Between 2002 and 2007 real GNP growth averaged more than 5 percent (Country Watch, 2008). The positive macro-economic development implies that poverty is less widespread today, but it has definitively not been eradicated. Both in poor rural areas and in urban slums food vulnerability is a serious problem (Rodrigues, 2007), and many people can only afford nutrient-poor food such as rice and/or have to skip

meals. Poor people dwell in ramshackle houses, live from hand to mouth and are hard pressed by constant worries about how to arrange something to eat the next day.

Another downside of the current situation is that the gap between the rich and the less well off has widened. The rich are both more numerous and more visible today than only a decade ago. In Praia and Mindelo, the two biggest towns, there are a growing number of people exhibiting their economic success through conspicuous consumption. Today there are definitively many more spacious luxury houses and big shiny cars than in 1996 when I first visited Cape Verde. The affluent lifestyle of the rich evokes mixed feelings of envy and aversion both among the poor and among people who are said to belong to the middle category of *those who get by* (Cr. *dzenrasgá*). Those who *get by* do not risk going hungry to bed and they live in decent housing, in contrast to the poor. An important negative aspect of the living conditions for this category (as well as for the poor) is that they seldom have an opportunity to work their way up in local society. Lack of formal educational merits as well as beneficial contacts with the political and economical elite exclude people from pursuing a career and gaining more money. In contrast to this standstill, novel and attractive commodities are constantly entering the local market and are creating new demand. Among the poor and those who *get by*, feelings of stagnation are also evoked by ideas about what others have achieved as migrants. The suffocating experience of fighting one's way through a life characterized by few changes and no advance is underpinned by comparisons with relatives and friends who telephone from abroad and talk about other possibilities. In conclusion, the implication is that although few Cape Verdeans are threatened by acute starvation today, reception of remittances can play a decisive role in people's security, life prospects and social status.

Emigration from Cape Verde began on a large scale about a century ago and has been directed to three different continents: Africa, America and Europe. Today, Cape Verdean authorities claim that the diaspora population outnumbers the half a million inhabitants in the national territory (Instituto das Comunidades de Cabo Verde, 2008). A majority of the Cape Verdeans have close relatives living and working in Europe or the US. A census I carried out in a rural village in Santo Antão showed that 85 per cent of the heads of households had a close relative abroad. A close relative is here defined as a parent, child or sibling, as in Cape Verdean transnational social field these are the most significant ties. The census also evidenced that nearly 60 per cent of the households received remittances at least sometimes.

As a percentage of Cape Verde's GNP, remittances constituted 25 per cent in the late 1970s (Bourdet, 2002). In 2007 they had declined to nine per cent³. These figures indicate that although the nominal inflow of remittances has increased, it is doubtful whether they play a more important role for the recipients today than they did in the 1970s when the reception of a letter containing some American dollars was a major event (Meintel, 1984). The generally higher standard of living as a consequence of the national economic growth has entailed that money and gifts from abroad tend not to have the same fundamental importance for people's survival as they had in the 1960s and 1970s.

In Cape Verde, as in many other places, people avoid openly discussing details of private economy, which makes it hard to gain an exact understanding of how remittances are used by individuals and households. Through participant information it has been possible, however, to learn how this money characteristically is used. Basically, remittances from relatives who have migrated are always very welcome, but seldom seen as a special kind of money to be used for specific well defined objectives. In the literature on remittances it is commonly assumed that receivers set them apart for specified and restricted use. My experience is that it is important to have a more open-ended view on this, especially when the remittance receivers are relatively poor and have to use the money to meet daily needs. In Cape Verde the money sent by relatives from abroad is felt as part of normal everyday life rather than something special or foreign. Often they are used for running household expenses or for paying electricity, water or telephone bills. Due to insecure and low incomes people are often forced to delay the payment of such bills, which means that the service in question is cut off. Thus, when remittances arrive a household may benefit from renewed access to electricity, tap water or a functioning telephone. Another common use of remittances is to pay off a debt at the neighbourhood grocer's shop, and thereby gain the right to new credit. In rural areas this money may also be employed for paying labourers to clear a plot of land. The money people on Santo Antão and São Vicente receive from the migrants is, however, seldom sufficient for financing more costly long-term investments. As I have shown elsewhere (Åkesson, 2009) due to the contemporary organization of transnational family ties many Cape Verdean migrants distribute their remittances to a number of households, which means that the money from abroad is both widely and thinly spread. In turn, this means that the reception of remittances today from family members who have migrated is seldom enough for financing the purchase of land, construction of a house or the establishment of an enterprise.

³ Calculated from *Alguns indicadores da economia cabo-verdiana* (Banco de Cabo Verde, 2008a) and *Remessas de emigrantes por país de origem* (Banco de Cabo Verde, 2008b).

Ungrateful and responsible migrants

In Cape Verde, as in other places, family relations are underpinned by moralities of sharing. All over the world, solidarity and closeness between relatives are expressed through exchange of material and non-material assets. This is true even when family members are geographically separated in consequence of migration (Eastmond and Åkesson, 2007). When Cape Verdean non-migrants talk about the migrants' remittance practices they often refer to a common moral grounded in the idea that close relatives shall support each other.

They allude to this idea irrespectively of whether they believe that the migrants are *ungrateful* or *responsible*. Thus, notions of migrants as either *ungrateful* or *responsible* both relate to a common moral.

The concepts *ingrôt* (from Portuguese *ingratola*, ungrateful) and *responsável* (responsible) are often used when people talk about the migrants' obligations towards family members left behind. These words sometimes function as shorthand signs for somebody's apprehension of another person. To blame somebody for being *ungrateful* is to say that he or she does not care (enough) about an already established social relationship. In contrast, *responsible* persons are perceived to be concerned about the welfare of others, able to disregard their own immediate desires and take into account the others' needs. In the multifaceted reality of everyday life people's attitudes towards the migrants' economical obligations are naturally complex. People have much more to say about their relatives abroad than identifying them as *ungrateful* or *responsible*. References to *ungrateful* / *responsible* persons should rather be seen as relating to two common narrative positions. By using these concepts the speaker adopts a traditional way of speaking about migrants obligations that is recognized by everyone.

Calling the migrants *ungrateful*

When people in Cape Verde are critical of migrants' generosity they frequently claim that their relatives are *ingrôt*. In general terms, an *ingrôt* person does not live up to expectations of what is considered to be normal support and affection for others. His or her egoism disappoints others. Accordingly, the concept *ingrôt* has a wider denotation than the English *ungrateful*, but in want of a better translation I use *ingrôt* and *ungrateful* interchangeably. The idea of *ungratefulness* builds on the idea that the maintenance of a social relation requires that one assists others. While living in Cape Verde the migrants (ideally) benefited from the support kin are supposed to give each other, and if the migrants break this tacit understanding of assistance when they have managed to leave they are *ungrate-*

ful. Accordingly, relatives abroad who send no or little news or who send less money than their non-migrant kin expect are characterized as *ungrateful*. Bia is a single mother of two children and earns her living on washing other people's clothes on irregular occasions. She has three sisters who live in Europe. Bia believed that they should support her more:

My sisters in Italy and Luxemburg they hardly ever send me something. Hardly ever. They are *ungrateful*. Really *ungrateful*. They work for a madam [i.e. as domestics]. That's not a hard job. It's very easy.

Bia expressed her anger at her sisters through calling them *ungrateful*. Her anger was deepened by her belief that her sisters live an easy life in Europe, while she toils hard for nearly nothing in Cape Verde. In relation to her own poverty and vulnerability she imagined her sisters' existence to be untroubled. Bia's frustration with lack of support from family members living abroad was shared by many people, as for example an elderly woman, Maria, who complained about her children who never sent her any money and rarely called her. Maria also used the concept *ungrateful* when she talked about her children:

Lisa: You have three children living outside Cape Verde, isn't that so?

Maria: Yes, I have one in America and two in Luxemburg.

Lisa: Do you hear any news from them?

Maria: News from them... you know what it's like. Nowadays it's seldom, seldom. It's seldom, all children have become *ungrateful*. The one in America, he's married and everything but he doesn't even remember me.

Maria was frustrated and sad not only because remittances failed to appear, but also because of her children's neglect to keep in touch. To refrain from phoning and *da notisia* (send news) may also be interpreted as an act of *ungratefulness*. In fact such omissions often bring about much sorrow and worries. People feel that they are forgotten, both as individual persons and in terms of their position as representatives of a *backward* reality the migrants have supposedly left behind. Many non-migrants fear that their relatives abroad see them as poor and underdeveloped, and that such notions make the migrants unwilling to uphold the contact. Few non-migrants can afford to make international phone calls, which means that the migrants are in control of the intensity of the transnational contacts. This, in turn, may reinforce the stayers' feelings of being exposed to the migrants' benevolence.

Underlining the migrants' responsibilities abroad

In contrast to those who talk about their relatives as *ungrateful*, others express strikingly little dissatisfaction. Instead they show an understanding and indulgent attitude towards their relatives abroad. The phrase "It's not obligatory to send" was often repeated by those who share this attitude. Lucy, a single mother with three small children, explained what this phrase meant to her when she talked about her mother who lives in Spain:

I don't expect that she... If I get something one time or another, I am thankful, but I don't believe it's obligatory, especially not as I live in her house. According to me it's not obligatory, I already have my own children and I have to assume my own responsibilities. It's ugly to ask [for money] even if you are in need. A good will, you are thankful the times when the money arrives in your hands. But never think it's obligatory. When you have your own children, you're the one who is obliged. She's not the mother of my children.

The most common way of exempting migrants from obligations to send remittances is to refer to their responsibilities towards family members in the new country. Having children in a country of destination is often seen as being associated with high costs. Calú, who has a brother in France, believed that his brother's parental duties made it impossible for him to remit money:

Calú: He has a family, and having a family abroad is difficult.

Lisa: Why is it difficult?

Calú: It's difficult because he has a wife and he has three children, that's difficult. He has a lot of expenses.

An elderly woman, Ana, who has three children in Portugal, had a similar understanding of migrant's difficulties to send money:

My daughter has a good job, but you know, she has three children, she has three children at school. But she sends me a little something when she happens to meet somebody who is going to Cape Verde. I have a son who is called Zé, he sends me some money now and then, he has only one child, a child and a girlfriend. And Wilson, he used to send me more, but now he has three children at school, and he has another one here, a daughter here. And that huge rent he is paying!

Ana also explained that, "Before my children always sent me money, but now Portugal has turned out bad, very very bad. There are no jobs. They don't have a job." Interestingly enough, later in the interview when Ana talked anew about

her three children in Portugal it became clear that they all were working and that at least one of them had a high status job and presumably a good income. This contradiction is probably a sign of how important it is for Ana to show an undemanding and understanding attitude towards her children who have migrated. She shares this stance with others who maintain that although they themselves receive irregular and small payments their relatives are not *ingrôt*. Instead, these non-migrants underline that their family members abroad have other and more important responsibilities than sending remittances to Cape Verde.

Supporting the family

The discourse on remittances takes place against a framework of moral notions concerning family obligations. Both those who brand the migrants as *ungrateful* and those who claim that relatives abroad have other responsibilities than taking care of kin in Cape Verde underline the moral demand on the migrants to support other family members.

As mentioned, *ingrôt* is in a general sense used about persons who do not acknowledge and support others. In some specific cases, however, *ingrôt* refers directly to ungratefulness, in the true (English) sense of the word. This is the case in some kinship relations. Ideas concerning a debt of gratitude are most clearly exposed in the close relation between a mother and her children. Women often portray the struggle for their children's welfare as *sacrifice*. By this they mean that they forsake their own well being for the sake of their children. The concept of *sacrifice* relates to devotion as well as to privation. In a moral discourse these sacrifices are the rationale behind the obligations migrants have towards their ageing mothers. There are strong expectations that a mother's sacrifices should be repaid by the children when they have grown up. Thus, migrants with ageing mothers in Cape Verde are easily branded as *ungrateful* if they do not send them any money. Elderly men cannot expect to receive economical support in the same way from their children. Many fathers claim that they are incapable of *helping* their young children due to economic difficulties and men who have not supported their children cannot later argue that adult children who have migrated owe them a debt of gratitude. As conjugal relationships generally are unstable in Cape Verde parents often do not live together (Åkesson, 2009). Thus, it is uncertain whether remittances directed to an ageing mother will also benefit the migrant's father, as the two parents may not live in the same household.

Even in other close family relations, where those concerned have *sacrificed* themselves for each other in a more equal way, the same way of thinking may be prevailing. This may be true for relations between siblings. There is a social de-

mand to return what one has received. When somebody migrates, this demand is transformed into an asymmetrical relationship, in which the migrant is the giver and the non-migrant the receiver. From the perspective of the non-migrants, the asymmetry of the relationship is based on the migrants and the non-migrants unequal access to material resources. Migrants are thus exhorted to support members of their immediate family at home without expecting equal recompense because they are assumed to be in a better economic position. If a close relative, such as a mother, is living in poverty, the expectations on the migrants increase. However, if relatives in Cape Verde do not need economic assistance from those living abroad, the expectations diminish or disappear.

As mentioned before, expectations may also lessen when the migrant has economic responsibilities towards family members in the country of destination. Cape Verdean migrants of both sexes tend to establish a new family, or at least become parents in the country of destination. When people migrate from Cape Verde today, their primary intention is seldom to send money home, although the hope to support family members may also be an important motive for migration. Nowadays, men and women migrate at roughly similar rates, and decisions to leave as well as the migration project in itself are first and foremost understood as individual enterprises. People aspiring to leave often formulate their migration project by saying, "I want to make my life". In practice, this means making the transition to autonomous adulthood in which one owns a house and is head of a household (Åkesson, 2004). To beget children and to be able to provide for them and give them a good education is an important part of the life-making project.

People in Cape Verde often acknowledge migrants' parenthood by saying that they have many responsibilities in the new place where they live. The notion that it is expensive to provide for children in Europe and the US is widespread and seen as an acceptable reason for not sending much money to family members in Cape Verde. According to this logic, moral migrants may support members of their family in the receiving country instead of sending money back home. They are not seen as *ungrateful* because they repay the debt of gratitude through supporting the new generation. Thus, both those who call the migrants *ungrateful* and those who believe that they are *responsible* maintain that the migrants are supposed to support family members. This also means that if a migrant has not created a new family abroad, relatives in Cape Verde may have higher expectations of economical support. If the migrant is a woman this may be especially true.

Conditions influencing notions of remittance practices

Thus, whether a migrant is perceived to be *ungrateful* or *responsible* may have to do with how the non-migrants view the migrant's family situation in the new country. However, other circumstances influence how people understand their relatives' economic obligations.

Ambiguities and variations over time

A person's opinion of a migrant's generosity may vary over time, in relation to the context or simply in consequence of how a conversation unfolds. An example of this is Bia, who was cited above complaining of her sisters who never send her anything. A couple of days after I had interviewed Bia I met her again and noticed that she was wearing a new pair of jeans. Bia then told me that one of her sisters had sent the trousers some weeks before our interview, and that because of that she was pleased with her sister. Bia's changing attitude probably had to do with the context of our different conversations. When she complained about lack of support from her sisters we had been talking about how insecure and vulnerable her economic situation was, but when I met her in her new blue jeans she was in a better mood and looking forward to a night out dancing.

A more fundamental shift in a person's judgement of the support from relatives abroad may be induced by changing life conditions. As shown above, Ana defended her children's choice to send her only a little money, but when she became ill her attitude changed. Then she sat on her bed crying "I haven't received any money, my children have forgotten me, how shall I survive?" She showed her empty purse to those who visited her, and expressed great distress. Ana's reaction seemed to have little to do with acute economical needs. During her illness she was cared for by a niece who had a steady and reliable income, and who provided well for Ana's material needs. Her agony was rather related to her feelings of being neglected by her children, even though she was ill. To talk about the remittances that failed to appear seemed to be a way of lamenting her children's disregard of her illness. In this case, and in many others, the talk about remittances was an expression of the quality of a relationship.

Urban and rural differences

In comparison with inhabitants in rural areas on the island of Santo Antão, people in the town of Mindelo tend to express more dissatisfaction with the migrants' economical contributions. In the town, consumption patterns and life styles are more diverse than in the countryside. Those who have made it are

often eager to display their socio-economic success. This tendency sometimes makes people from rural Santo Antão talk about the urban population as people who are obsessed by *mostrá grandeza* (showing off grandeur). The material wealth of some inhabitants of Mindelo is a constant thorn in the flesh of all those town-dwellers who barely make ends meet. For most people daily urban life revolves around efforts to gain access to scarce material resources. In the fight for a better and more dignified existence relatives abroad are potentially an important resource, and people may feel a strong disappointment when support from the migrants fails to appear.

Among rural villagers, and especially among the elderly, attitudes are different. Conceptions about honour play a more important role than in the urban environment. Probably the strength of these notions is related to the influence of the Catholic Church, which is stronger in rural Santo Antão than in urban Mindelo. Rural people sometimes make a virtue of not complaining about their situation, but instead point out that they are able to fend for themselves. This attitude is especially common among elderly men, who sometimes maintain that it is improper to ask anyone for economical help. A strong version of this standpoint was held by a man in his eighties who explained that he had not applied for the monthly pension of 3.000 CVE (30 Euro) he was entitled to from the government because he considered reception of this subsidy a sign of a person's inability to feed himself. In the same vein, other rural Cape Verdeans sometimes underline that they do not expect family members abroad to remit money.

Economic and social marginalization

Naturally, a person's economic situation has an impact on how they view the migrants' remittance practices. The poorest often talk about reception of remittances as their only hope for a better future. People who live in a desperate economic situation and who have relatives abroad do more often than others claim that their relatives are *ungrateful*. It is not certain, however, that grievances about receiving too little are straightforwardly related to a lack of material and economical resources, as the case of Djina shows:

Djina lives with her five children in a small room on the first floor of a house that seems to be close to collapse. The room is empty except for three mattresses, five wooden stools, a cupboard and a refrigerator that doesn't work. Djina tells me that her children have three different fathers, and that only one of them supports her with money. Djina herself works at a restaurant "when they need me" and at other times she earns some money through taking in other people's laundry. When I ask her whether she receives any money from her brother in Portugal, I expect her to complain about his *ungratefulness*, but she does not:

Lisa: Your brother in Portugal, does he send any money?

Djina: Ooh poor thing! You know Lisa, life is difficult everywhere. He may send us a little something now and then, maybe once every year.

Lisa: Once a year?

Djina: Yes, it's not a great security for me, but he has his own responsibilities. A hard life, he has bought a house, every month he has to pay for it.

Looking at Djina's barren room and her five children I find it hard to understand her generous and forgiving attitude towards her brother. As I get to know Djina better I begin to understand that despite her poverty she is a person who is respected in the local community. She has many friends and she often receives visits from different family members. This sets her apart from some of those who complain about remittances that fail to appear. These persons are quite frequently marginalized in relation to others in their community. They tend to have few friends and are sometimes subject to slander. Sometimes they worry deeply about their future and claim that their relatives abroad have *forgotten* them. Being socially marginalized in local society leads to deep feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness, and this, in turn, may increase a person's sense of need for security and support from the migrants. This may also help to explain why Bia called her sisters *ungrateful* and stated that they never send her anything despite the fact that she recently has received clothes from one of them. In the peri-urban neighbourhood where Bia lives many talk about her behind her back and she has few, if any, friends. Evidently this makes Bia deeply frustrated, and maybe she blows off some steam by slandering her sisters in Europe.

Emotional closeness

Another reason for Djina's acceptance of the lack of support from her brother is the tight relationship between the two siblings. Djina often receives news from her brother and she is well informed about his life in Portugal. She knows that his job as a construction worker is both insecure and badly paid, and she believes that he fights hard to give his children good schooling. It is obvious that she likes her brother and worries about his situation.

Statements about a migrant's generosity, or lack of, can be linked to the emotional content and closeness of a transnational relation. Those who feel close to their relatives abroad may find it easier to accept that the migrants cannot send so much money, while those who feel that they are forgotten sometimes are more prone to criticize their relatives for the lack of economical support. Moreover, migrants who keep up an intimate dialogue with their relatives have better possibilities to explain their economic situation in the new country. They may describe

how their everyday responsibilities limit their opportunities to send money to Cape Verde. Thus, keeping close contact can to some degree compensate for a failure to send remittances.

The knowledge about family members' life abroad varies enormously between different individuals and households. Some have quite vague ideas about their relatives' everyday life. Others have intimate insights into the migrants' lives, as the example of Luzia and her family illustrates. For the past six years Luzia has lived as an undocumented migrant in the US. She has one child there, whom she supports on her own. In Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, she has two sons who live with her sister, and Luzia sends them 200 USD every month. Luzia's mother and youngest sister, Rosa, live in rural Santo Antão. They receive a phone call from Luzia at least once a week, and then they talk intensely for about half an hour until Luzia's telephone card expires. Moreover, they receive news about Luzia from other relatives who also talk to her regularly and from some neighbours, who have a relative who lives in the same American neighbourhood. Rosa knows exactly how much Luzia earns, what she pays for a bus ride and how much money she has borrowed to buy a leather sofa. Rosa also knows the price of a number of common food-stuffs in Luzia's local grocery shop. When Rosa talked about Luzia's possibilities to send money it was evident that her close insights into Luzia's economical situation informed her attitude:

Before Luzia sent us some dollars every month, but she can't do that right now. She has so many expenses because she has to pay for her three kids. When her new boyfriend moved in she had to buy a new sofa, and now she has to pay for it every month. She earns very little because she is illegal, which means that her employer can exploit her as much as he wants. I know that she would give us money if she could.

Rosa has three children of her own and no secure income. Together with her mother, she and her children live in a tiny house with neither a kitchen nor a closet. It is obvious that her material living conditions are poorer than Luzia's, who recently has bought a leather sofa. Despite this Rosa understands and appreciates Luzia's fight for a better and more dignified existence in the US. When Rosa says that "in America dollar is everything" she refers to Luzia's constant worries about unpaid bills and the fact that Luzia works six days a week at two different low paid jobs. Rosa does not demand more money from Luzia when they speak to each other on the phone. Rather she tries to comfort her and give her hope for a better future. Rosa and Luzia's mother says that it is not Luzia who is *ingrôt*, it is America that has turned *ungrateful* (Cr. *Merca vrá ingrôt*). Thus, she states that

Luzia does as much as she can to help, while the US has failed her. According to this elderly woman, the US is *ingrót* because the country does not live up to the expectations of all those who migrated there in order to improve the living conditions for themselves as well as for their relatives left behind.

Increased interrelatedness between Cape Verde and *stranjer*

The maintenance of emotional closeness in long-distance relations has been facilitated by the rapid development of communication technologies. Moreover, the increased interrelatedness between Cape Verde and the outside world has had a major influence on people's perceptions of the migrants' possibilities to support them. Traditionally, countries of destination (*stranjer*) have been imagined as places where all migrants who are willing to work hard can earn a lot of money and then return and live a comfortable and care-free life in Cape Verde (Åkesson, 2004). Today many Cape Verdeans from different social backgrounds say that this image is "an illusion". Instead a more complex and pessimistic image has emerged of the possibilities migration may entail. People are often aware of the fact that their relatives abroad may become subjected to exploitation, unemployment, racism and in the worst case deportation back to Cape Verde. Many also know that when migrants return in fancy clothing to spend a grand holiday eating, drinking and dancing these weeks of leisure have to be paid for by many months of hard and dull work. Visiting migrants who make themselves important talking about their accomplishment abroad are sometimes met with scepticism. "I know that she is cleaning toilets at the hospital" a friend whispered to me while we were listening to her cousin who talked about her "medical studies" in France. These more nuanced perceptions about life in *stranjer* may reduce people's economical demands on their family members abroad. Insights about the hardship of migration make it easier for non-migrants to accept that their migrant relatives sometimes are unable to help them.

Those Cape Verdeans who have a deep and nuanced knowledge of life abroad often rely on many different sources. Tourists, television and the accelerating inflow of imported commodities play a significant role. Most important, however, are the personal contacts with people living outside Cape Verde. Today, after many decades of out-migration the transnational networks between the non-migrants and migrants are manifold and complex. The network of Rosa, the woman from rural Santo Antão who was introduced above, illustrates this. As mentioned Rosa's sister Luzia lives in the US, and Rosa has two other siblings who also live with their families in the US. Moreover, the father of Rosa's youngest child lives there. One of Rosa's brothers has migrated to Luxembourg and

she has five cousins in Portugal and France. All these relatives phone Rosa more or less regularly and when they occasionally come back for a holiday in Cape Verde they pay a visit to her. Rosa also receives second hand information about her migrated relatives' whereabouts from family members and friends in Cape Verde who have been in contact with them. In Cape Verde, information and gossip about people who live far away is a common topic of conversation in all kinds of social gatherings. News about one's daughter in Lisbon or mother in Italy is as frequently discussed as the fluctuation of food prices or the uncertain prospect of rain. This means that Rosa, who is a sociable person, constantly receives pieces of news from or about her migrant family members. All this information makes it possible for her to piece together a rich and nuanced idea of their respective lives. Without ever having met Luzia's new boyfriend she can discuss whether he really is an honest person and she can describe in detail the equipment of the car her brother has bought in Luxembourg.

With regard to communication technologies, the intensification of contacts between Cape Verdeans at home and abroad is mainly due to possibilities of making cheap international telephone calls. Steven Vertovec (2004) notes that although globalization is normally associated with advanced communications technology, nothing has facilitated long-distance contacts more than the fall in the cost of international phone calls. The development of communication technologies means that many migrants stay in almost daily contact with family members in the country of origin. An important contribution to the expansion of international phone calling has been the development and spread of cheap prepaid telephone cards. When visiting Cape Verdean migrants in the US I was amazed by both the frequency and the long duration of their phone calls to Cape Verde. As an example, I noticed that during one single day members of the same household called four times to Cape Verde. A call could last for anything between five minutes and two hours, and frequently a number of different persons at both ends of the line took turns in keeping up the conversation. Talk mostly revolved around everyday matters, and resembled in many ways face-to-face social intercourse. All this was possible thanks to the supply of cheap phone cards. Given such intensity in transnational contacts it is no wonder that many of those who stay behind know a lot about the migrants' living conditions, and thereby may adopt a more understanding attitude when remittances do not arrive.

Conclusions

As mentioned in the introduction, the remittance literature frequently refers to dissatisfied recipients. According to a number of ethnographic accounts, criticism of the migrants' generosity is common among family members left behind (e.g. Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001; Riak Akuei, 2005; Eastmond, 2007). My experiences from Cape Verde, however, are more mixed. Cape Verdean non-migrants may blame their relatives abroad for being *ungrateful*, but they may also adopt a more understanding and less demanding attitude and try to explain why they receive no or little money. The basic idea is that it is a moral obligation to support family members. When migrants support dependents in the country of destination it is more likely that relatives in Cape Verde will defend the migrants' right to send no or little money, because the migrants are already fulfilling family obligations. Thus, the non-migrants' attitudes may reflect the fact that their relatives have many people to support in their new life abroad. This is, however, not the only condition that influences the non-migrants' notions of the migrants' remittance practices. In this paper I have outlined five other factors that may affect the non-migrants' attitudes.

Firstly, kinship positions and gender interplay with the moral obligations of sending remittances. For example, migrants who do not send money to an ageing mother are easily branded as *ungrateful*, while they run less risk of being criticized if they fail to support an elderly father, especially if he neglected his children when they were small. Secondly, there tend to be some differences between rural and urban people's attitudes towards monetary gifts such as remittances. In urban areas, increasing social stratification in combination with globalizing patterns of consumption give rise to social and economic insecurity and a constant need for money. In contrast, elderly rural dwellers tend to express more satisfaction with their fate. Thirdly, the non-migrant's status in the local society seems to be consequential for how he or she judges the migrants' remittance behaviour.

My material indicates that social exclusion and vulnerability sometimes are more important factors than economic needs when it comes to feelings of being forgotten by the migrants. Fourthly, the personal relation between the sender and the receiver is important. When a transnational relationship is characterized by an emotional closeness, the non-migrant tends to adopt a much more accepting attitude to a migrant who fails to send money. Fifthly, the intensity of the transnational contact and the information the recipient has about the migrant is a key condition. Today, new and cheaper communication technologies allow highly in-

tensified contacts in dispersed transnational families. In migration research and policy there is a widespread picture of recipients as uninformed about the realities migrants encounter. This needs to be modified. At least in the case of Cape Verde, which is a country that has witnessed comprehensive migration outflows during the last fifty years, those who have stayed behind have access to many different sources of information regarding their relatives life abroad. Sometimes the non-migrants are in a position to form a well-founded opinion about the migrants' possibilities to help. Naturally, this can make the recipients' demands more well-balanced.

The Cape Verdean case study I have presented here nuances the picture of remittance receivers as always asking for more money. As I have made clear, the undemanding attitude has little to do with prosperity among the potential recipients. Many people both in urban and rural Cape Verde are very poor, despite the rapid macro-economic development taking place in the country. To these people the reception of 50 or 100 Euro would make life much easier, at least for a period of time. But despite this, the notion that the migrants cannot be asked for more seems to be gaining ground, at least in comparison with the situation in colonial times. Whereas 30 or 40 years ago the dominating idea was that hard-working persons could gain as much money abroad as they wanted (Meintel, 1984), today there are more nuanced perceptions. People's images of life abroad are changing due to the increased relatedness between Cape Verde and the rest of the world, emerging out of the process of globalization. Unemployment in countries of destination as well as the high costs of living are well-known in Cape Verde. This helps potential remittance receivers accept that their children and siblings who live abroad have other responsibilities besides supporting family members in Cape Verde.

Lastly, this article shows that the meanings of remittances for the recipients are far from purely economical. Their understandings of the migrants' obligations are often an expression of the quality of the social relation between the sender and the recipient. In some cases, a close transnational relation may provide those left behind with feelings of security, even if the transfer of money is irregular. Transnational emotions may be more important than transnational economics. For those involved, remittances are about much more than economic utility. The fact that this is seldom recognized points to an overtly rational understanding in social science research of the role remittances play in people's lives.

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